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## **Indian Ocean Tsunami Detection Coming**

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CAPE PANWA, Thailand (AP) -- A Thai ship set sail Friday to deploy the Indian Ocean's first high-tech tsunami detection and warning device, a step toward preventing a repeat of the catastrophic loss in the 2004 tsunami.

Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis, or DART, system.

tsunami.

The ship, which departed from the island of Phuket, will sail to a spot about 700 miles west of the Thai coast near the Nicobar islands, where it will deploy what is known as the

The DART buoy, a sophisticated measurement and communications device developed by the U.S. government, will be the first of its kind in the Indian Ocean when it is deployed Sunday. It will ensure residents of the area's coastal regions get at least an hour's warning of an impending tsunami.

Nearly 250,000 people in 12 Indian Ocean countries died from the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami caused by a 9.3 magnitude earthquake off the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

Scientists knew the size and location of the quake within 10 minutes, but had no way of knowing if it had generated a dangerous tsunami. What little information was known could not be communicated effectively due to the lack of a warning network.

The international community rallied in the wake of the tragedy with reconstruction assistance and a dedication to avert similar tragedies in the future.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, a <u>U.N.</u> organization, took the lead in planning for an Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System.

The United States is contributing \$16.6 million over two years in money and expertise, including paying for the \$500,000 device. Thailand is paying for its maintenance, which is at least as expensive as the original capital outlay.

The DART device will link a water pressure detector 3 miles under the Indian Ocean seabed with a tethered buoy.

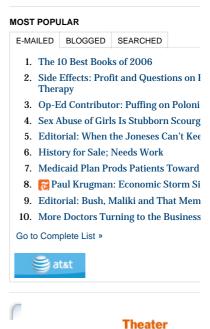
Located at a key point along the area's main undersea fault line, the device will note any increased water pressure indicating a tsunami following an earthquake. It will relay the data to the buoy, which is designed to transmit it by satellite to monitoring stations in more than two dozen Indian Ocean countries within seven minutes.

"This is a very symbolic key step," said Curt Barrett, director of the International Tsunami Project Team for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "Now we will finally be able to immediately determine if there is a tsunami from an earthquake," Barrett said in an interview.



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"Most of them don't turn into tsunamis, so it's very important to know if a particular earthquake, an 8.1 magnitude one, for example, which can trigger a tsunami, is it a real thing or not a real thing?" he said.

The DART system was developed in the mid-1990s and six of the buoys were deployed in the Pacific at the time of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Barrett said.

The catastrophe was a wake-up call not only for the devastated areas, but also for the U.S. and the rest of the world. There are now 20 buoys ringing the Pacific Ocean, designed to protect an area that is also vulnerable to tsunamis, he said.

A recent 8.1 magnitude earthquake in Russia's Kuril islands in the north Pacific proved the effectiveness of the DART system, Barrett said.

When the quake occurred Nov. 15, "five of the DART buoys engaged automatically and started sending information," he said.

The computer modeling system proved "pretty accurate," he said. Warnings and alerts went out in time and the DART buoys indicated -- accurately, it turned out -- that the generated tsunami was very small.

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